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AUTHOR Van den Bergh, Bea
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ABSTRACT

At the request of the Family and Welfare Council of Belgium, the Centre for Population and Family Studies compiled a documentation file on child care. Part of the documentation file, this updated working paper discusses literature addressing child care, particularly the quality of relationships between children and caregivers and development of children's self-esteem. Topics of research reviewed in the paper include: (1) responsibility for education; (2) Bowlby's maternal deprivation theory; (3) attachment theory; (4) Swedish and American research on effects of child care; and (5) development of competency and self-esteem in young children. The paper draws some conclusions from its review of the research: (1) the quality of nonparental care is of primordial importance to the evaluation of its effects on children; (2) whether at home or in a day care setting, the quality of the educator-child relationship is a very--if not the most--important facet in child development; (3) poor quality care or poor support systems for parents have negative effects on children; (4) high-quality care in a center is comparable to high-quality family day care; and (5) more research is needed on the possibly differing processes of development of children in nonparental versus parental care, the experiences of children themselves, and other cultures. (Contains 106 references.) (EV)

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CHILD CARE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE EDUCATOR-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Policy relevant conclusions based on a brief review of literature

Bea Van den Bergh

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Bea Van den Bergh

CBGS

Centre for Population and Family Studies
A Scientific Institute of the Flemish Community
Markiesstraat 1, 1000 Brussels
tel. 02/553 35 69, fax 02/553 35 57
e-mail address: CBGS@wvc.vlaanderen.be

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Family and Welfare Council the Centre for Population and Family Studies made up a documentation file on child care in early 1999 (Deven, Lambrechts, Van den Bergh, Van Dongen & Wyns, 1999). The present working document —obviously updated— is one part of this file. It presents a reflection on an age-oriented basic approach to child care, one of the key options worded in the Draft Policy Plan on Child Care (dd. 16 Sept. 1998). The main idea underlying this option is that child care should optimally cater for the various age dependent development needs in children.

Essential —to put ideas into practice— is the starting point that the age-oriented basic approach is considered as the interpretation of the child's point of view. This child's point of view is obviously essential in child care. It is a sound principle to be somewhat suspicious if this is linked with an age-oriented basic approach because here is a snake in the grass. After all, a far too rigid belief in what can, may or must at a particular age presents the risk of becoming very soon an actual straitjacket that nowadays, if served out in the guise of the "child's point of view", stands a good chance of finding acceptance, though in essence it has only little concern with this "child's point of view".

In this contribution we will sketch out a number of ideas on what could be viewed as an age-oriented basic approach to child care for young children. We will do this starting from the framework and manner in which research on the effects of child care has been carried out, from an outline of a number of significant findings of this research and from new insights into a fundamental concept of development psychology, namely the development of self-esteem, showing a manifest link with the attachment theories.

Beforehand, however, we have to consider or sketch more widely the background of the child care debate. This point has been underemphasized in the policy document. Therefore we obviously think it useful to refer to Diekstra's line of thought (1992, 1993) on education responsibility in the Netherlands, because he gives a number of answers to questions which in the child care debate are seldom broached.

2. EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITY AND THE PARADOX OF PARENTHOOD (DIEKSTRA, 1992)

According to Diekstra (1992) the discussion about education responsibility is held against a background of implicit views on development conditions, assuming in particular that the parents are in the first place the bearers of the education responsibility.

However, the implicit character of these beliefs has given rise to a confusing and unclear policymaking. The fact is that the government continues to lay the primary education responsibility on the parents or on substitute caregivers without specifying the contents of this responsibility. An ambiguity is already noticeable here. The radical changes that occurred at macrolevel over the last few decades have led to fundamental changes in development tasks and related development needs. Nevertheless, at policy level there is a tendency towards continuing to place the child)rearing responsibilities primarily on the parents or on the caregivers.
Diekstra (1992, p. 35) wonders whether this privatization is especially meant as a relief of the government budget or if there are other arguments for such a line of policy. He thinks it evident that an ideological factor plays a part in this as well.

For almost four centuries already the western scientific and prescientific educational literature has been dominated by what he calls the "early-childhood-environment" paradigm. Emotions, values, skills and customs acquized in childhood and youth are supposed to be so deeply embedded that, as a result, the character, the social functioning and the level of well-being are also fixed. He presumes that Erasmus with his work. "De civilitate morum puerilium" (Of the refinement of the youth's customs) laid the basis of it in 1530. With the increasing separation between family and working environment towards the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, with the emergence of the nuclear family, the opinion gained more and more ground that the prime condition of the child's development is the loving attachment relationship with the biological mother (Freud, Bowlby). Such a relationship not only induces a "basic trust" in life and in other people but it also promotes the motivation for and the adoption of socially adjusted or desirable behaviour patterns, notably in the sense of self-discipline. According to recent beliefs this adult person need not be the biological mother although preference is given to her.

In spite of the fact that there is empirical evidence for a connection between the quality of "maternal care" for the young child and the behaviour

of that child later in life, Diekstra (1992, p. 37) argues that the strength and the nature of this connection are definitely not such as to make it possible to draw sufficient information from it for the sake of the "right pattern". The quantity of variance in the individual well-being and in the social functioning in adolescence and adulthood, which have to be attributed to other factors (inter alia, experiences in later life, biological features (temperament), events of life and situational factors) is too big for it.

Diekstra (1992, p. 38) points out that an ideology that emphasizes the inalienable character of the bound between parent and child affords at all times a self-evident justification ground for policy scenarios in which the government's role with regard to child education is especially "distant" or "reserved".

In Diekstra (1992, p. 38) the paradox of parenthood receives the following content:
"Whereas influences outside the family on children's development and behaviour have increased in quantity and strength over the last few decades and still increase and whereas more and more adults are stimulated to fulfil roles (such as occupational duties) which compete with the educational parental role, the emphasis on the psychological and social importance of the parental role has grown at the same time".

At present, and more than ever, the parental role is subject to uncertainty, ambiguity and inner conflicts. Determining factors of this are:
(1) the parental role which is supposed to be crucial must be fulfilled in a society in which numerous parallel socialization influences exist, inter alia the school and the media. These influences may support, compete or impede;
(2) many young people are placed before development duties (such as the school career) the demands of which exceed the intellectual and social competence of their parents. Parents are not able to give the necessary support, but share the consequences of contingent failures and often feel therefore guilty too. In addition, parents themselves are under great pressure because they have to fulfil several roles.
(3) more and more the parental role is played alone, as a result of the increasing number of one-parent families.

Another element of the paradox is that those who are more and more considered as the persons primarily responsible for a sound education and development of children, namely the parents are also more and more seen as an obstacle to reaching that aim.

Effects both society and government approach children's problems as a manifestation of parental behaviour patterns or individual family situations.

The paradox of parenthood is therefore, on further consideration, also a paradox for the government and for society as a whole (Diekstra, 1992, p. 39).

In our opinion Diekstra wants to demonstrate that it is no longer tenable to try to solve structural problems at microlevel if they have arisen at macrolevel. With these ideas in mind, which according to us, have been insufficiently qualified by Diekstra, we will give an outline in paragraph 3 of the investigation into the effects of child care and in paragraph 4 we will examine how it is possible, from fairly recent insights into the development of the new-born child, the baby and the infant and into the development of self-esteem, to contribute to the education of children whether they are cared for by their own parents or by other persons.

3. AN OUTLINE OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF CHILD CARE

A vast number of studies have already been carried out into the effects of child care. At international level reviews of studies of these studies are regularly published (among others Belsky, 1984, 1986, 1988,b, 1990; Belsky & Rovine, 1988; Clarke-Stewart, 1988, 1989; Clarke-Stewart, Allhusen & Clements, 1995; Lamb, 1996, 1998; McCartney & Philips, 1988; McGurk, Caplan, Hennessy & Moss, 1993; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), Early Child Care Research Network 1993, 1996, 1997a, b, 1998a, b; Richters & Zahn-Waxler, 1988; Rosenthal, 1999; Rutter, 1981; Scarr, 1998; Sphancer, 1997; Silverstein, 1991; Singer, 1993; Tavecchio et al., 1996; van Ijzendoorn et al., 1998; Van Crombrugge & Vandemeulebroecke, 1991; Zoritch, Roberts & Oakley, 1998). The importance of this investigation must definitely not be underestimated and its findings can afford insights in order to delineate policies. Within the scope of this document we cannot intend to go very deeply into research, findings and criticism of research. We will confine ourselves to give an outline of the lines of force of the investigation, mainly in the light of the following publications:

(1) a review of the investigation carried out by the Centre for Population and Family Studies before 1980 (Leroy, 1980);

(2) a longitudinal investigation performed in Sweden in which 119 children from 3-4 years of age to 8 and 13 years of age are followed in order to find out the effects on the cognitive and socioemotional development of the education and care which they received from their first year of life, either exclusively at home, in a day-care centre or with a host mother (Andersson, 1989, 1992, 1996). The results are compared with those of a similar study also carried out in Sweden but started up later on (Lamb, Hwang, Broberg & Bookstein, 1988; Wessels, Lamb, Hwang & Broberg, 1997).

(3) a short follow-up investigation, conducted in America among 589 children who at the age of five were followed during three months in order to study their adaptation to the infant school and to see whether this can be connected with the extensiveness of the external care that they received since birth (Bates et al., 1994). An elaborate longitudinal investigation among 1153 children which from their first months of life have been studied by means of various methods (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Early Child Care Research Network[1] (1993, 1996, 1997a, b, 1998a, b);

(4) recent reviews of studies of Lamb (1998) and Rosenthal (1999) on the effects of "ordinary" childcare and the methods of investigation into these effects and also a study review of Zorich, Roberts & Oakley (1998) describing the effects on health and well-being of children which are deduced from intervention studies with a controlled randomised design.

3.1. Bowlby's "maternal deprivation"-theory and research into effects of childcare, conducted before 1980: study of literature by Leroy (CBGS, 1980)

Age dependent needs of children are often deduced by developmental psychologists and others from clinical studies. This implies that from the observation of a deadlocked development, contingently an unsatisfied need, it is inferred what the needs of the child are. One of these studies has left an impressive mark upon the ideas about children's needs, namely Bowlby's "maternal deprivation"-study (1951, 1969). From the observation of the developmental backwardness of children in institutions, this British psychiatrist concluded that these children lacked for maternal care. He therefore pointed out that all children have a need for a warm, steady relationship with a caring person. Leroy (1980, p. 2-3) describes how this view

[1] Further on we will refer to publications of this network with NICHD Early Child Care Research Network.

had a profound influence upon development psychology and clinical child psychology, i.e. by erroneously linking this theory to the then altering family roles. In line with Bowlby's observations it was feared that children of employed mothers or children in care centres would show a similar (maybe a less heavy) backwardness than children in institutions. It was supposed that certain needs of children were not satisfied. This supposition underlay numerous studies on development of children of employed mothers and children receiving day-care.

In 1980 Leroy (1980, p. 114) concluded from her study of literature that in the light of the then available, mainly American studies, it may be claimed that entrusting young children to group care has generally not the disastrous effects feared for by reason of the literature about children in institutions. This finding is the most obvious for intellectual development. With reference to socioemotional development she thinks it possible to conclude that, measured by classical means, no great differences are found between children using non-parental child care and children mainly reared at home. This does not imply that no differences have been noticed, but it is unclear which significance can be attached to the differences observed by some researchers. In her opinion this applies a fortiori to the differences in the longer term. It is obvious that the situation of children using childcare facilities cannot be regarded as identical to that of children in institutions or even to that of children staying at home. Moreover, a noteworthy fact is that Leroy (1980) thinks that the components of the situations in nonparental care and parental care, considered to be important to development, have insufficiently been investigated. Consequently it is difficult to pronounce upon this. More than once disparities in development between children receiving day-care and home-reared children had to be attributed to factors by which groups systematically differ from each other and which had initially been overlooked (e.g. educational level of the mother, family size). Leroy (1980) also pays attention to the view that existing cultural stereotypes among employed mothers may probably more or less be guilt-inducing. After all, it is not inconceivable that a self-preoccupation, resulting from these feelings of guilt interferes with the sensitiveness to signals of the child and thus hampers the sensitive responsivity, which is of crucial importance in the relationship with the child. She concludes: ... *insofar as such myths appeal to psychological "evidences" we think it necessary to contradict them categorically (Leroy, 1980, p. 121).*

3.2. Further research from an attachment theoretical perspective and bottlenecks in existing research

Bowlby's underlying theory that separations from the mother irrevocably lead to serious psychological damage in the child had to be readjusted under the influence of empirical research. In the early eighties a consensus was reached in northern Europe and the United States about the view that day care from the third year of life or later has no ill effects on the psychosocial development of the child (see Lamb & Sternberg, 1990). Starting from the view of the "enlarged rearing environment" Van Yzendoorn, Tavecchio, Goossens and Vergeer (1982), whose work strongly influenced the Dutch-speaking regions, claimed that not only the mother is able to perform the attachment person's function. Other persons too, even several persons together, prove to be able to accomplish this task. Van Dam and Van Ijzendoorn (1990, p. 71) argue that within such an enlarged rearing environment a separation from the mother is less problematic because in that case the child can fall back on other attachment persons.

At the end of the eighties vivid debates were held in the United States about the effects of day-care on young children, within the scope of research from an attachment theoretical point of view. Secondary analyses and meta-analyses of existing research led to contradictory findings. Belsky and Rovine (1988) and Belsky (1986, 1988a, b, 1989) concluded that children who already in their first year of life received day-care more than 20 hours per week, run a greater risk of an insecure (avoidant) attachment to their mothers and that boys would be unsafely attached to their fathers too. This finding has not been corroborated by the meta-analyses of, among others, Clarke-Stewart (1989), Lamb & Sternberg (1990), Lamb, Sternberg & Prodromis (1992).

The secondary analysis carried out on the basis of Dutch data (Van Dam & Van Yzendoorn, 1990) also revealed that the condition of employed mother (and out-of-home day-care) is unrelated to the quality of the mother-child attachment or with fearful attachment behaviours such as avoiding and keeping off. Besides, differences in responsivity to their babies did not exist between full-time employed mothers, part-time employed mothers and mothers at home.

It would we wrong to conclude from these studies that good attachment relationships are not important for the child, quite the contrary. To the importance of this we will return in the second last section.

It is certainly true that a number of important other variables have been lost from sight through the fact that much research was set up from a attachment theoretical perspective.
According to Leroy's work (1980) and the reviews of studies mentioned the following bottlenecks and methodological shortcomings have been met with in the numerous studies of the last quarter of the century.

(1) Cross-sectional research based on small sample surveys instead of longitudinal research, retrospective instead of prospective research;
(2) Much research was based on the Strange Situation Procedure of Ainsworth, but its validity for children of employed mothers proved insufficient[2].
(3) Little consciousness of multiple determinants through which it is omitted to include in research features not only of the home situation (e.g. educational strategies of parents, marital relationships, support from social network) and of the day-care situation (e.g. educational strategies of educators or a host mother) but also of the child itself (e.g. temperament);
(4) Variety of dependent variables which are not always equally relevant to the child's well-being;
(5) Insufficient attention to specific contextual elements such as the quality of the interaction between child and educator, the size of the groups, the educator-child ratio;

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[2] The Strange Situation Procedure (see Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth, Blehor, Waters & Wall, 1978), - was devised by Mary Ainsworth who died in 1999 and has been one of Bowlby's first co-operators. This procedure is intented to find out the quality of the attachment. As a diagnostic instrument the procedure is especially usable for children between 6 and 20 months of age. The children are brourght into a laboratory situation strange to them and are observed for about twenty minutes. A number of times the child is left alone. Sometimes a strange person tries to come into contact with the child in the presence of the mother, and after that in the absence of the mother. A few times the mother also returns to the child in the room. Ainsworth assumes that this natural stress situation arouses in the child an attachment mechanism making it possible to discern safely attached from unsafely attached children. She distinguishes three types of attachment in young children and this especially on the evidence of the child's behaviour in the periods where the mother after a separation returns to the child, namely: type A – children with a fearful and avoiding attachment, type B – children with a secure attachment and type C – children with a fearful and keeping off attachment. Clarke-Stuwart (1989), Lamb et al. (1997) raise objections against using this procedure among children of employed mothers receiving day-care. After all, it is not unthinkable that these children got used to situations of separation and to coping with new environments, persons and stressful events so that, properly speaking, they do not experience anything strange or stressful in the research procedure. It follows that in them the attachment mechanism is not aroused, so that it is actually impossible to pronounce on the quality of the attachement (Verhofstadt-Denève, Van Geert & Vuyt, 1998, p. 77-90).

(6) No allowance made for the parents' satisfaction with their working situation or with the combination of family and employment duties;
(7) No distinctions made between the moments at which children start receiving day-care (before or after the first year of life) or between the number of hours' day-care (i.e. "extensiveness of nonparental care");
(8) No distinction made between the various kinds of child care;
(9) No account taken of the extent to which in specific sociocultural contexts nonparental child care has generally and unprejudicedly been accepted and of facilities such as paid parental leave;
(10) Little experimental or quasi-experimental research with controlled randomised design.

Even after 1990 the controvery between the research teams of Belsky (1990) and Clarke-Stewart continued. Belsky (1990) infers from a review study that an investigation in Israel and the United States has shown that among children in day care not the nature of the attachment to the own parents is predictive for their further development, but the very nature of the attachment to the day-care educators. He concludes:
'.. the possibility that factors and processes that shape development in the case of traditionally home-reared children may function differently —and perhaps not al all— in the case fo children with extensive day care experiences is suggested by several recent studies of infants (Belsky, 1990, p. 897)
.. To the extent that different processes of development are found to characterize children growing up in contrasting ecologies, the will prove important, not simply for our understanding of the developmental effects of day care, but for general developmental and family theory as well (Belsky, 1990, p. 898).

This conclusion might have for-reaching consequences. However, recent findings of the Early Child Care Research Network from research carried out by, among others, Clarke-Stewart of the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (1998a) at Bethesda (USA) suggest caution as to this conclusion.

Below we will sketch out the results of methodologically well-founded studies in Sweden (Andersson, 1989, 1992, 1996; Lamb et al., 1988 and Wessels et al., 1997), where high-quality nonparental child care has been common practice for a long time and where research has less been dominated by the attachment paradigm. We will compare this with recent research in the United States (Bates et al., 1994; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (1996, 1997a, b, 1998a, b) and we will give an outline

of the significant findings from a recent study review of Zoritch, Roberts and Oakley (1998).

3.3. Longitudinal studies conducted in Sweden

3.3.1. The Study of Andersson (1989, 1992, 1996)

As early as 1989 Andersson in Sweden carried out a well-founded longitudinal study pointing out the effects of nonparental child care on the social, cognitive and personal development of eight-year-old children (n=119). The children were monitored from the age of three to four onwards. Questions were asked about child care as regards the preceding period. Comparisons were made between day-care in day-care centres, with a host family (host mother) and child rearing at home. Moreover distinctions were made according to the time (before or after the first year of life) at which the child started to use day care. The day-care centres in Sweden are quite explicit on the point that they not only intend to take care of children, but also to stimulate education, in which the emotional and social development is considered as more important than the intellectual, cognitive preparation for subsequent schooling, although the latter is given due attention too. Children receive guidance by childcare workers who after compulsory education attended a two-year training course and by nursery school teachers who followed a two-and-a-half year training course at a Teachers' College. Host mothers are encouraged to undergo short training.

One third of the children receives day care as from their first year of life. This number increases to 70% at the age of four and remains stable until the age of seven. For children using nonparental care is staying in a centre the most occurring and most stable type of care.

The hierarchical regression analyses showed that among eight-year-olds the socio-economic variables (mother's training, occupational status of parents, family type, change in family type) accounted for 10 to 12% of the variance in the cognitive variables and for 7 to 14% of the variance in the socioemotional variables. Moreover, the age at which day care started, again explained 6% of the variance in the cognitive variables and 3 to 11% in the socioemotional variables. Children who from their first year of life received day care, did at the age of eight, as regards many result variables, better than children who only after their first year of age started using day-care and than children who did not use day-care facilities at all and were brought up at home: they proved less anxious at the transition

from nursery school to primary school, scored higher in cognitive tests and achieved better school results. In addition they were more highly rated by teachers with regard to social and personal qualities. As to verbal communication the children from all types of nonparental care scored better than children who were reared at home. These results are thus in contradiction with findings from American Studies (Belsky et al., 1990) revealing that children who before their first year of life received day-care for a long time obtained lower marks in a number of studies than children who only after their first year of life used this type of care. Andersson (1989, pp. 864-865) attributes these contradictory findings to the quite different context of child care in Sweden and the United States. In our opinion he points to a fact which is also most relevant to Flanders.

... The meaning for parents of the Swedish family and child-care policy is that they can stay home for a major part of the child's first year of life without losing money or risking their job. .. After that they are offered good day care. This may create an ideal situation both for parents and children...

... Child care is not seen as a substitute for paid parental leave during a substantial part of the child's first year. Instead, parents can take advantage of both and can feel secure during a susceptible period in their lives, and the possibility to return to work while the children are in good care may stimulate them and make them grow as parents, which in turn might be good for the children and their development. An more directly, the children can benefit from the extra stimulation of meeting other caring adults and peers...

This interpretation of the positive effects of Swedish day care suggests two testable hypotheses: first, that day care that begins after 6 months will have more beneficial effects than day care that begins prior to that time; and, second, that negative effects of early day care may occur primarily when that care is of poor quality (Andersson, 1989, pp. 864-865).

This study is one of the first methodologically well-founded studies into the long-term effects of high-quality nonparental child care, which prompted us to discuss it in great detail here. The follow-up study was continued (Andersson, 1992) and at the age of thirteen as well the children who at a young age already received nonparental childcare scored better for cognitive and social skills than children starting later with this type of care or who in the pre-school period were only cared for by their mothers. Andersson (1996) also considered gender differences and found that especially boys who already received nonparental child care at a young age scored well at school

later on. The gender differences were smallest among children who started using day care between six and twelve months of age.

Hartman (1991), Hagekull and Boklin (1995) came to similar positive findings in their studies into the effects of nonparental child care, also carried out in Sweden.

3.3.2. The study of Lamb et al. (1988) and Wessels et al. (1997)

Already in the longitudinal follow-up study conducted by Lamb and his colleagues in Sweden, prospective data on young children were collected. It was also possible to follow the development in the time (measurements carried out at 24, 40, 80 and 101 months of age) and to make comparisons between:
(1) children not receiving day care;
(2) children using day care in a centre and
(3) children being given day care in a host family.

They monitored 122 firstborns (or children with no brother or sister younger than twelve) living with both their parents, with a starting age between 12 and 24 months (average age = 16 months) and not having received nonparental day care at the start of the investigation. The findings over the first two years of the follow-up study revealed that the day-care type had no effect on the social skills and the personality development of the child (Lamb et al., 1988). As to the age of eight it appeared that there was nearly no difference in the course of development between children who did not receive day care and children who were given care in a day-care centre. However, children aged between 16 and 40 months who were cared for in a host family, differed from these two categories of children in their course of development. In comparison with these groups they evolved less in the direction of ego-resilience and field independence. Moreover the weakness of their ego-control declined less in the time. In addition to the effect of the day-care type, it appeared that measurements of the quality of child care (measured at home, in a day-care centre or in a host family), the socio-economic status of the families (predominantly middle class) and other family features had no moderating influence on the outcome variables! They conclude that day care in host families often does not fit the children's development needs and associate themselves in this with an American Study (Galinsky, Howes, Kontos & Shinn, 1994; in Wessels et al., 1997).
They further insist on the development and imposition of standards for the quality of child care in host families. The fact that no differences were found between children reared in day - care centres and children brought up at home, goes counter to the findings of Andersson (1989, 1992). Ac-

cording to Wessels et al. (1997) group differences already existing before Andersson included the children in the study might account for the eventual differences in outcome variables between both groups. In our view this explanation does not exclude that the contradiction between the findings of Andersson (1989, 1992) and Wessels et al. (1997) may have to do with the fact that Andersson (1989, 1992) involved children in his study who started using day care before their first year of life (from the age of six months), whereas the average starting age in the study of Wessels et al. (1997) is 16 months.

3.4. Recent prospective and longitudinal research conducted in the Unit States

3.4.1. The study of Bates et al. (1994) carried out in Tennessee and Indiana (USA)

The article of Bates et al. (1994) gives in the introduction once again a brief outline of contradictory findings relating to the link between the extensiveness of nonparental child care in the first years of life and certain outcome variables. Consideration is given to studies in which a negative connection was found with outcome variables as secure attachment agressivity at school and mixing socially within the peer age group, and also to studies in which either no connection or a positive link with the extensiveness of day care was observed. They finally refer to Silverstein (1991), who proves that in most studies into negative effects of day care no signifant connections whatever with the outcome variables were found.

In the investigation of Bates et al. (1994) 589 children are included. They are tested and observed for the first time at the age of five – in the week before attending nursery school. Next they are monitored during three months. Then, in the light of the information gathered, a sort of index is made of the extensiveness of nonparental child care in each of three successive periods (0-1 year old, 1-4 years old, 4-5 years old). Moreover, a number of connections are considered with a number of variables which are grouped under two indexes: one concerning positive adaptation (teacher's opinion on the relationship with class-fellows and opinions of the latter on the child's popularity) and the other relating to negative adaptation (agressive behaviour assessed by the teacher and the observator, unpopularity with class-fellows).

Bates et al. (1994) do not state figures about the number of children using nonparental child care. They give a short description of the quality in an average day-care centre. Educators must have achieved secondary education and be at least 18 years old. They receive a short training (first aid, nutrition ...) during 6 or 12 hours per year. The standards imposed are generally very low.

After a statistic control for variables like social category and family stress, day-care accounted for 2.9% of the variance in positive adaptation and 2.7% of the variance in negative adaptation.

Not so much the fact that day-care use started before or after the first year of life seemed to be important, but the extensiveness of day care in the subsequent periods. Children who after the first year of life made ample use of nonparental care did somewhat less well than children who after the first year of life received less day care.

How do these researchers explain the evidently significant yet very small effects of nonparental child care?

.. The associations found between day care and adjustment outcomes suggest the importance of further research on the processes by which day care is related to social development. One hypothesis (based on studies like Howes, 1990) is that deficiencies of quality in day care would be the key in the process (Bates et al., 1994 p. 696)...

Until the moderators of the link between extensive day care and child adjustment are better understood, it appears that there is a basis for practical concern. Even if the present results are assumed to be completely attributable to an unmeasured interaction between extent of care and quality of care, the study adds to previous evidence that greater amounts of day care in the range of the quality typically available in the United States may be associated with a slightly greater risk for problems in kindergarten (Bates et al., 1994, p. 697).

Generalizing from Howes (1990) and Field (1991) it appears that the first thing to monitor should be the quality of day care... Different children will often be affected in different ways by any given condition (Wachs, 1992) which argues for both the importance of monitoring of the experience of the individual child and the development of more ideographic research paradigms (Bates et al., p. 697).

3.4.2. The investigation of the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (1997a, b, 1998a, b)

In this prospective, longitudinal study carried out by a team of psychologists under the direction of Clarke-Stewart and others, 1153 children of 10 centres and their mothers have regularly been examined, —the children as from their first month of life— by means of interviews, questionnaires and observations at home, and in the day-care setting. Use was made of various scientific methods in order to measure the experiences of the children both inside and outside the family and to ascertain the mother's functioning, the mother-child interaction and the quality of the environment. The effects according to the age at which day care started, of the extensiveness, stability and quality of the care and the type of care were considered. The quality was checked on the evidence of four observations lasting three quarters of an hour. For measuring quality two measures were used, one based on the frequency of certain behaviours, the other on qualitative behaviour ratings (sensitivity, responsivity, cognitive simulation, ...). The child's behaviour was measured on the basis of standardized behaviour questionnaires completed by the parents and other educators and of video recordings of behaviour observations. Thus measurements were obtained of problematical behaviour, social behaviour, obedience, positive and negative interaction with children of the same age and adults, assertivity....

The results of the follow-up study relating to the age of 15 months show that nonparental care in itself involves no risk and offers no benefit either to the attachment with the mother as is measured with the "Strange Situation". At the age of 15 months, for instance, no effects of extensiveness, type and starting age of nonparental care on the attachment to the mother were observed. It has indeed been established that the effects of nonparental care depend on the quality of the relationship with the mother. If a child has a mother who is not very sensitive and responsive and if, in addition to that, it receives low-quality day-care, it uses only occasionally day care and more than one type of day care, the attachment to the mother proves less good than in the case of a child reared by a mother of that type (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997b).
(Former research already revealed that these children generally continue to function at a lower level, although the secure attachment to a caregiver from a high-quality child-care setting may compensate for an insecure attachment to the mother (Howes, Roding, Galluzzo & Myers, 1988).

A remarkable result adhering to a general tendency in reset to pay attention to gender differences (see also Hunter, Pearson, Ialongo & Kellam,

1998), showed that boys were less securely attached if they stayed in day-care for many hours, whereas it is exactly the opposite for girls: they were less securely attached if they stayed in day care for few hours.

The findings in children aged 24 and 36 months corroborated, broadly speaking, the results with children aged 15 months (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1998b). The effect of nonparental child care in itself was rather small. None of the child-care variables accounted for more than 3% of the variance in the outcome variables. The variables connected with the family functioning (in this case the way in which the mother handled her child) made it possible to predict more easily the behaviour at the age of three than the starting age, the extensiveness, the stability, the type and the quality of day care. Of all these child-care variables it was the quality of child care (that had the most effect: children in high quality day care scored better for social competency and co-operative behaviour with caregivers and children of the same age, and had fewer behaviour problems at the age of 2 and 3. Children who stayed together with more than three children in a type of care (i.e. host mothers or day-care centres) scored better for social behaviour at the age of 2 and 3.

The findings are contradictory to those of Bates et al. (1994), in the sense that extensive nonparental child care already starting at a young age, has no negative effects on later behaviour. The researchers emphasize that only in a later phase of the study they will be able to give a definite answer about possible "sleeping" effects which might only manifest themselves later in life. The researchers conclude that further investigations into family and nonfamily effects on the young child's behaviour will be necessary.

The investigation thus reveals that the effect of child care in itself is smaller than was thought and has especially to be studied in regard to the quality of the relationship with the mother (parent). This is also concluded by Lamb (1996, 1998) in his review (see below).

3.5. Reviews of studies on effects of "ordinary" child care (Lamb, 1998; Rosenthal, 1999) and of intervention studies among young children (Zoritch et al., 1998).

In reviews of studies into the effects of nonparental child care a distinction should be made between studies considering the effect of "ordinary" existing nonparental child care and studies in which an attempt is made to influence children's behaviour through specific interventions. In experi-

mental investigations, which are rather unfrequent (see infra) checks are made in order to find out whether this object has been attained.

3.5.1. Results of studies on "ordinary" nonparental child care (Lamb, 1998; Rosenthal, 1998).

Lamb (1998) recapitulates the results of recent investigations into the effects of ordinary nonparental child care.
It is obvious that many shortcomings of the investigation of before 1980 have been removed (see above). Attention was now concentrated more on processes taking place within the childcare setting than merely on structural features (group size etc.) (Rosenthal, 1999). It has become patently obvious that the quality of child care is an important mediating variable. The quality of child care is not only connected with structural features, but also with process features. One of these features is, for instance, the degree of attunement between parents and caregivers on educational attitudes (cf. Van Ijzendoorn, Tavecchio, Stams, Verhoeven & Reiling, 1998). High quality child care appears to have a favourable effect on the intellectual, verbal, cognitive and social development, especially of children who otherwise would grow up in a rather unstimulating environment.

Because from the methodological point of view the investigation was buttressed more strongly, the effect of confounding variables could be clarified. So it proves very important to include in research on effects of nonparental child care the quality of the parent-child relationship. The effects of nonparental child care in itself appear to be smaller than the effects of the existing parent-child relationship (see supra). If a proper control is not exerted over these effects, possible differences between children in day care and children reared at home can wrongly be attributed to nonparental child care. It is emphasized that in further investigation even more allowance should be made for existing interindividual differences between children, e.g. temperament differences. Having a difficult temperament constitutes a risk factor to an optimal development (Rothhart & Bates, 1998). A high-quality child care would better deal with trying children than a low-quality child care (Rosenthal, 1999). This means that a prognosis for a favourable development of difficult children is better in a high-quality child care setting than in a low-quality child care setting.

With good reason Lamb (1996, p. 331) wonders why the investigation had so far only very sporadically dealt with the question whether the father's absence in the family has an unfavourable effect on the father-child at-

tachment and why almost all attention was focused on the question whether nonparental child care would negatively affect the mother-child attachment.

Rosenthal (1999) extends the scope of the investigation into child care. In her outline she clearly sketches out how the Werstern view on an adequate development of children determined research questions and research methods. Moreover she points out the ethnocentricity of child-care research. Scientific research is not free of culture-linked values. It is grafted upon prevailing views (e.g. on "optimal development") of a specific culture in a given period (cf. Van den Bergh, 1998). Rosenthal (1999) explains that there is a lot of cultural variation on the definition of optimal environment for the development of young children (e.g.; Hunter et al., 1998).
It is, for instance, known that in Africa elder brothers and sisters care for the younger and that in Japan much more importance is attached to group relationships than to individual relationships with a child. In such communities a lengthy absence of the mother is therefore considered much less problematic (and definitely not unfavourable) to the child's development and, ideally, the investigation should not be steered by such questions. Rosenthal (1999) insists upon a less ethnocentric view on child care and on child-care research. She thinks that research into the quality of child care should always make explicit the specific sociocultural definition of the development objects and of the way in which one believes to reach them best in education practice. This will make matters clearer than if an implicit start is made from the universality of this definition and from the education strategies to be used. Only if an explicit procedure will be adopted, it will be possible to distinguish between "universal" and "culture-linked" effects of child care on the child's development. She refers to a number of studies which in her opinion succeed in carrying out culturally sensitive research into child care effects. It seems to her that this type of research is extremely important in periods of rapid socio-economic changes. Consequently she concludes:

"Socialization agents, and other stakeholders, cannot be certain about the kind of future today's children will have to cope with or adapt to, nor can they be certain as to how best to prepare them for this future. This uncertainty merits even more careful examination of the goals set for child care and ites valued child-rearing practices (Rosenthal, 1999, p. 510-511).

Under section 4 recent western development psychological views on development of young children are discussed.

3.5.2. Results of intervention studies on young children (Zoritch et al. 1998)

As regards effects of "nonparental day care" Zoritch et al. (1998) filed 920 publications and 19 books by means of computerized bibliographical investigation systems. They were interested in studies with a controlled, randomized design. In such kind of studies children are assigned at random to an experimental group or to a control group. In the experimental group children meet with interventions (targeted on the stimulation of cognitive, social and emotional development), whereas in the control group no intervention or an alternative intervention, takes place (e.g. health services, social work services ...). Afterwards the performances of both groups are compared. Only on the basis of such design it is possible to pronounce on the effectiveness of the intervention (Zoritch et al., 1998, p. 323).

In their file Zoritch et al. (1998) found all-in-all 8 studies which were sufficiently buttressed from a methodological point of view. All of them appeared to be carried out in the United States. The eight projects showed big differences among themselves with regard to number of children (40 to 985), starting age (from birth to the age of four), length of the follow -up period (age of 6 months to 27 years) and the intensity of the intervention (from 2 hours per week during 8 months to 7 hours per day, 5 days per week during a five-year period). Six studies related to children from lower socio-economic classes and only two studies to children out of middle socioeconomic classes. In most projects the effects later in life on cognitive development (IQ) and progress at school are considered and in some projects the behaviour and health of the children are evaluated as well.

The conclusions drawn by Zoritch et al. (1998), in the light of these eight studies on the effects of, out-of-home day care, are in line with the findings from the described longitudinal studies, but have (owing to their experimental design) stronger persuasiveness. It has experimentally been shown that out-of-home child care favourably affects important facets of children's well-being, namely the stimulation of the cognitive development (IQ) and the prevention of subsequent failure at school. The longer the duration of the intervention the greater the later chance of academic success, but it is still unclear what exactly is the most sensitive period. It appears that the most intensive project, starting at the age of 6 months and lasting until the age of 5, had the greatest effect.

The children from the experimental group evinced less problem behaviour in class and less criminal behaviour later in life than the children from the

control group. The mother-child interaction proved generally better among children from the experimental group. This agrees with findings of the NICHD investigation and contradicts those of, among others, Belsky and Rovine (1988).

Finally Zoritch et al. (1998) state that in research it is also advisable to consider the experiences of the children themselves with out-of-home care. These have been rather unfrequently dealt with in research until now. Langstedt (1994), for instance, did interview young children about their views on and experiences with nonparental child care. Children attach great importance to the game in itself and to their relationships with friends; the skills acquized and the social competency are for them not the main point, but only side-issues.

3.6. Conclusion from the investigation: effects of day care on young children.

In the light of the sources consulted, representing a wide area of research, we may conclude as follows:

(1) The quality of nonparental child care is of primordial importance to the evaluation of this type of care and of its effects on the child;

(2) In child care provided at home or in a day-care setting the quality of the educator-child relationship is very important, if not the most important facet in child development and this at all ages. This quality is connected with the degree of the educator's sensitivity and responsivity in respect of the child and with the way in which this person enables the child, by a positive social confirmation, to build up a favourable self-image;

(3) Extensive use of care and education in high-quality centres, combined with a wide range of facilities for parents, enabling them to take care themselves of their young child after birth and to develop a positive, responsive relationship with it within a culture in which nonparental child care is highly rated, offers additional opportunities to the child. Later in life the skills of these children are, from a cognitive and a socioemotional point of view, higher than those of children who at an early age were permanently reared at home. It is provisionally stated that in the first six months of life after birth a high availability of the parents is important. However it has not been proved that high-quality nonparental child care in that period of life would be unfavourable to the child's development;

(4) Use of care in low-quality centres, combined with few facilities for parents in order to be sufficiently available to their child in the after-birth period, few opportunities making it possible to build up a responsive and sensitive relationship with the child and a culture in which nonparental child care is considered to be unfavourable, offers the child few opportunities and may lead to a more difficult socialization later in life (agressive behaviour, less good relationships with children of the same age and a less secure attachment to the mother). This type of child care should not be extended;
(5) Care in the first year of life in a high-quality child-care centre is to the subsequent development of the child, if not better, certainly not worse than care in a host family. Research does not show that, in case of equal quality, it would be advisable to entrust a child of less than one year old to the care of a host family, rather than to that of a day-care centre. More guarantees should be built in for the quality of care both in day-care centres and in host families;
(6) The processes and factors affecting the development of children using extensively nonparental child care may differ from those influencing the development of children who are cared for at home, however, further investigation proves necessary in this case;
(7) In research it is essential to pay attention to the experience of the children themselves; however, this occurred only sporadically;
(8) There is a need of intercultural comparative research in which the western (American) view is less determinative.

4. Investigations conducted into competency and self-esteem of young children

It is remarkable that in the psychological literature about the very first period of life the amazing "competence" of new-born children (Dörnes, 1993; Stratton, 1982) and even of fetuses (Nijhuis, 1992; Lecanuet, Fifer, Krasgenor & Smothermon, 1995; Van den Bergh, 1989) has already been in the foreground for a considerable time, whereas in sociologic literature (among others Bardy et al., 1990/1993's Qvortrup, 1990/1994) and in literature on children's rights it is rather stated that in societal dealings children's incompetence is especially emphasized or is at least used as an argument in order to deny children a number of rights (Verhellen, 1993, Van den Bergh, 1994). This contradiction is striking and intrigued us. It became our starting point for finding out more about children's competence, about how society and science look at it or what is claimed in this respect. A first response to this, namely the interaction between the scien-

tific and societal approach to children, can be found in Van den Bergh (1997, 1998). These contributions deal with the background of the dominant child image, with the role played in it by sciences as psychology and pedagogy, with the alterations that sociologists, in the wake of developments in other sciences, think being able to make to this. In Van den Bergh (1997) emphasis is also laid on the changes occurring in the relations with children in society and in the family, whereas in Van den Bergh (1998) an outline is given of how the approach to children has evolved in scientific research.
Rosenthal's contribution (1999), for instance, clearly illustrates the connection between the dominant western view on children and the approach to children in research on the effects of nonparental child care.

For the sake of an age-oriented approach to nonparental child care it seems useful to us to examine what recent scientific insights impart about competency and self-esteem of children. They will as far as possible be connected with the quality of the educator-child relationship, since this proves of crucial importance to education and nonparental care of young children.

4.1. The competent new-born child and fetus

Sometimes it is forgotten that the present insights in the development of babies are quite recent and that in a short space of time science has made an enormous progress. According to Prechtl (1992) it was sixty years ago generally assumed that new-born babies were not able to hear or to see. The fact that in the last few decades emphasis has been laid on the competence of the neonate and the fetus, rather than on their limits, is not so much concerned with a sudden increase in the capacities of the neonate or the fetus in that period, but with the fact that from a scientific point of view right questions have been put and appropriate research methods and instruments used in order to ascertain the existing capacities (cf. Rovee-Collier & Lipsitt, 1982, p. 157: ... when the experimental questions are posed differently, however, we frequently see that the deficit resides in our methods, not in the infant"). These children are in their initial period of life no longer approached and examined in the first place from the adults' points of view and must no more have the same skills as the adults for being regarded as "competent" (Hepper, 1992). This implies, inter alia, that, as for them, no longer the central nervous system of the adult is considered as a standard - in comparison with which that of the neonate and the fetus is by definition immature - but that is moved on to a model in which the central nervous system of the neonate and the fetus themselves

constitutes the starting point and in which stress is rather laid on subcordical and budding neocortical functions (Bronson, 1982). In the last few decades the competence of the neonate, from the visual, auditive, olfactory and tactile point of view, was amply documented (Van Wullften-Plathe & Hopkins, 1984) and it has been established that the neonate shows an adaptive behaviour and is able to learn (Rovee-Collier & Lipsitt, 1982; Stratton, 1982). Fetal behaviour and competencies have extensively been studied too (Busnel et al., 1997; Lecanuet et al., 1995; Nijhuis, 1992; ten Hof & Nijhuis, 1998). A number of authors do not refrain from pointing out the asymmetry in this competence; the motor behaviour, for instance, is less strongly developed.

What is important and described by Stern (1985) in his book with the eloquent title "The interpersonal world of the infant" is that the neurophysiological and cognitive equipment of the neonate enables him or her to have perceptions of their own stages of development, from an ever-increasing feeling of connection between various perceptions in the motor and affective field (the so-called "crossmodal" perceptions). This feeling of coming-into-being also implies the awareness of being different from others from whom perceptions of growth cannot be borrowed. Out of this "emergent self" (0 to 2 months of age) develops a "core self" (2 to 6 months of age), a separate physical unit consisting of perceptions of own initiative, own feelings and continuity in the time (Matthys, 1990, p. 25).

Anyway, the scientific recognition of the baby's "competence" did not only constitute the starting point to a series of studies on the quality of those competencies, but also into the effects of it for the relations between babies and their primary educators. In research and science babies are more and more considered as individuals and as "actors" and no longer as mere objects which passively undergo influences of their environment.

Whereas in former studies and theories emphasis was especially laid on the features of the mother which would affect the interactions with and the development of the child, there has already been for a considerable time a consensus on the fact that certain features of the child also exercise an influence on the interaction with and on the behaviour and the perception of the parents (mother) (Als, 1977; Bell, 1968, 1979; Clarke-Stewart, 1988; Dunn, 1979, 1981; Packer & Rosenblatt, 1979; Van Wullften-Palthe & Hopkins, 1984). It is in the interest of the child that insights from this area of research are in the early educator-child relationship put into practice in all educational settings (de Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1998). The impor-

tance of the early educator-child relationship to the development of self-esteem will be described below.

4.2. Development of self-esteem in young children

Susan Harter (1998), an authority on development of self-esteem in children, gives, in her recent contribution, an outline of important developments which have taken place in this field over the last fifteen years. An integration of several perspectives 'psychoanalysis, attachment theories, social psychology, cognitive psychology) led to a for better comprehension of the cognitive emotional and social processes of the growing self. She notes that the most remarkable results could be attributed to the decisive role assigned to caregivers. Whereas formerly a link was established between a specific style of education and differences in behaviour of children, it is now accepted that the educator-child interaction is determining for the development of self-esteem. Accordingly Harter, in her theory on development of self-esteem, besides stressing the importance of the child's more typical need to interact competently with its environment (competence need, cf. James), also emphasizes the role of other "important figures" in childhood. Following Cooley, Mead and Baldwin, Harter (1998) assumes that the child's self-esteem reflects how parents and other important figures view him/her.

These are in the first place the parents, but it is recognized that other educators, children of a peer age group, brothers and sisters, also play an important role in the dynamic and interactive development process of self-esteem. Feelings of self-esteem reflects the way in which a person is assessed by other important figures. If the child experiences that others have a positive image of him/her he/she will build up a positive self-image. In attachment theories (Ainsworth, 1990; Goldberg, Muir & Kerr, 1995) it is assumed that, on the basis of current patterns of interaction with the attachment figures, the child builds up a working model of the relationship with the attachment figure that may be considered as a dynamic conception of qualities and of the behaviour of the attachment figure towards the self. A child with a secure attachment has positive expectations of the availability and responsivity of that person, whereas a child with an insecure attachment has negative expectations of this. Building on these working models the child also builds a working model of the self which is separated from the relationship with the attachment figures. If the child builds up a secure working model of the relations with the attachment figures, he/she will also build up a secure model of the self and consider himself/herself

as a valauable and reliable person. In case of an insecure attachment the working model built up of the self will be that of a nonentity. The quality of the attachment with the attachment figures (the other important figures) is inextricably bound up with the quality of self-esteem. This process already starts at birth (Bretherton, 1991, 1993; Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Goldberg et al., 1995). In reference to this, researchers point out the existence of differences in the quality of the attachment with the mother, the father and other educators (Fox, Kimmerly & Schafer, 1991; Goossens & Van Ijzendoorn, 1990; Main & Weston, 1981; Rosen & Burke, 1999) and the different importance of the attachment with either of the parents in the child's development (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999).

Unlike former beliefs newborns have a primary "self" and are biologically equipped for enabling them to interact with the educator. Klein (1981) and Stern (1985, 1990) base themselves on empirical research in order to demonstrate that the neonate perceives himself/herself from birth as being separated from the outside world and not as "undifferentiated". Accordingly he has not to pass through a "normal autistic" or a "normal symbiotic" stage as Mahler, Pine & Bergman (1975) assumed. Like the theory of Bowlby, for a long time the theory of Mahler left its mark on research into development of young children. If we know that in the newborn infant a primary "self" exists that is able to interact with the caregiver, this obviously leads to another attitude of the caregiver in the educator-child relationship than if it is accepted that the neonate is not endowed with these capacities.

... the first sense of self is formed in the crucible of children's intimate relations and is profoundly influenced by these interactive experiences .. there is an organization of self that exists at the outset and that resides in the dyadic system of infant and caregiver (Harter, 1998, p. 559).

Harter makes a distinction between a number of successive periods in the building up of self-esteem, (1) 0 to 4 months of age, (2) 4 to 10 months of age, (3) 10 to 15 months of age, (4) 15 to 18 months of age, (5) 18 to 30 months of age in order to sketch out this development. Especially the knowledge about the first three periods has increased during the past 15 years. It is beyond the scope of this contribution to deal with it extensively. We produce below a selection from Harter's (1998) central notions about each period of life concerned.

(1) 0 to 4 months: The newborn must form links between isolated experience and extract invariance about the self as well as the caregiver. In so doing,

there is an emergence of the organizaton and integration of the perceptual and sensimotor systems. These early acquisitions are attained during what Sanders (1975) labels the stage of 'initial regulation'. The infant's state and caregiver intervention are coordinated leading to the establishment of a predictable, comfortable pattern of sleeping, feeding, elimination, quieting and arousal. For Sroufe (1990) such dyadic physiological regulation is the prototype for later psychological regulation, characterized by coordinated sequences of behavioral interactions (Harter, 1998, p. 559).
The young infant's capacity for imitation also contributes to the ermerging sense of self because behaviors modeled by significant others are adopted by the self. (Harter, 1998, p. 560).

(2) 4 tot 10 months: During this period, the infant becomes increasingly differentiated from caregivers, which in turns permits new levels of relatedness, including the development of an interpersonal self.
Most of the developmental acquisitions of this period occur in the context of intense social interaction with caregivers. ... These acquisitions require interaction with a 'self-regulating other'. Sander has described how, during this stage of 'reciprocal exchange' sensitive caregivers craft and coordinate an organized system of behavioral sequences around the infant. Such reciprocal exchanges occur around feeding, dressing and simple games. Infants can not create such organizations independently, but they are capable of participating in sensomotor routines... For Sander it is not until approximately 7 months that the infant actively chooses or initiates to promote reciprocal exchanges with the caregiver (Harter, 1998, p. 561).

(3) 10 to 15 months: Most contemporary theories place emphasis on the forms of shared experiences and interpersonal connection. For example, during this period, infants come to realize that their subjectieve experiences, their attention, intentions and affective states can be shared with another.... (Harter, 1998, p. 561).
Sroufe (1990) has observed that there is a qualitative shift in the caregiver-infant system during this period, with clear evidence for a social relationship, whereas previously it was primarily organized interaction. The sharing of affective states can be observed (Harter, 1998, p. 562).

Another form of mutuality can be observed in parental imitation of their infant's behavior. Meltzhoff (1990) describes how parents function as a 'social mirror' in this regard. His research reveals that infants show a preference for adults who imitate their actions with toys (compared to adults who engage in infantlike toy behavior that is not imitative). The inferences is that infants can recognize the self-other equivalence involved when an adult imitates them. Through reciprocal interactions with the caregiver, leading to

shared meanings, a sense of 'we' emerge, in addition to a sense of the I-self (Harter, 1998, p. 562).

We may accept that the baby has an actual feeling of the "self" about the 5th or 6th month of life. For the further development of this primary self the relationship with the educators is very important. It is through this very relationship that the feeling of the self will strengthen and that the kind of self-esteen will be determined. The importance during the first few months of life of a sensitive, responsive and supporting relationship between parent and child, in which the own contribution of the child is sufficiently recognized, cannot enough be pointed out. Here is laid the foundation of what Goleman (1996) calls the "emotional intelligence".

In this connection it will be noted that the question to what extent the attachment history of a child will affect his/her further relationships still remains a central question, both in theory and in research. Bowlby started from the idea that the mother-child relationship is comparable to a mould for all subsequent relationships. Harris (1995, 1999) makes a stand against this and does not accept, inter alia, that the attachment with the mother should be considered as a blueprint for further relationship competence. She argues that the child does not develop only one working model but a great many: one for each relationship (Harris, 1998, p. 167). She thinks that in literature the importance of the early parent-child relationship to the later personality development has been exaggerated and she states that relations with people of the same group from the various groups to which the child belongs in the course of his/her life, are more important. She developed the theory of "group socialization". On the other hand other researchers find in their longitudinal investigations evidence for the fact that experiences in the first educator-child relationship will continue to be of overriding importance to later relationships (see among others Sroufe, Egeland en Carlson, 1999; Howes, Hamilton & Philipsen, 1998). Although there is no unequivocalness on the question about the connection between the early parent-child relationship and the subsequent relationship competence of the child, researchers agree that not only the relationship with the parents but also with children of the same age and people of other peer groups play an important part in the living environment and the development of a child (Collins & Laursen, 1999; Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 1998).

We also notice that the division suggested by Harter cannot be used as a straitjacket. After all, what really matters is being aware of underlying mechanisms and making allowance for that in the child's education and

guidance. The fact is that its expression in a concrete situation differs from child to child and that it is unpredictable. The gradual assimilation with and accommodation to the environment from an perception of the "self" occurs through the self-organizing support from the environment. This is actually a contradictory principle which for that very reason proves so difficult to convey. It is not concerned with an external imposition of a tight pattern on the child, but with being sensitive to the signals of each child that thereupon receives guidance in such a way that he/she will just be able to take that subsequent step to which he/she is prepared in his/her cognitive, social and emotional development (cf. Vygotsky). Precisely within these crucial interactions several things seem not to pass off well in childcare (Leavitt & Pwer, 1989; Michelson, 1990). However, wonderful examples also show how things can turn out well (e.g. the working of the day-care centres in Regio Emilia (Italy) which has already been imitated in Norway and the Netherlands)[3].

In order to make more certain that this positive self-esteem and emotional intelligence will effectively be developed in children receiving day-care, it is important that the educators themselves possess sufficient emotional intelligence. First and foremost, greater importance should be attached to this matter in training. In addition to the fact that a more highly trained staff may presumably be given a deeper insight into the mechanisms and their importance, special emphasis should be placed on social skills as an important item in the selection procedure on recruitment.

5. General conclusion

If an age-oriented basic approach to nonparental child care is considered as an interpretation of the child's point of view, it is, in order to pay more than lip service to this principle, essential to connect this age-oriented approach with the responsibility of society for the parents' educational responsability. Only if parents are supported adequately and according to explicit view in assuming their educational responsibility, the paradox of parenthood can be disentangled, in the interests of the child, the parents and society. Offering ample facilities of parental leave during the first six months after birth, developing high-quality child care, making great demands on and having high expectations of the quality of the educator-child relationship in all educational settings and, simultaneously, creating the

[3] For further information see: Stichting Pedagogiek ontwikkeling voor het jonge kind, Nieuwe Keizersgracht 25-27, 1018 VA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Tel: +31-020-622.86.55, Fax: +31-020-626.67.11, E-mail: pedagoog@xs4all.nl.

required guarantees and opportunities for implementation, will optimally contribute to the development of cognitive and socioemotional competences in the child. A positive development of the child in one environment benefits a positive development in the other. Deficiencies in one environment may, to a certain point, compensate for deficiencies in the other. Deficiencies in both environments have a harmful effect upon the child's development and every effort should be made to prevent and combat them.

We conclude this document with a quotation from Zigler, dating back to 1973, the initial period of research into child-care effects. This requires no comment.

This is a period of great debate and great turmoil in regard to day care and early childhood. It is a time of confusion and overheated rhetoric, a period when sense must compute with nonsense. But there is certainly a signal in all of this noise. We can agree that every child of a working mother has a right to a day care environment conducive to his optimal growth, and that every working mother has a right to the peace of mind that the existence of such an environment for her child provides (Zigler, 1973, p. 60 by Lamb & Sternberg, 1990).

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Editorial Secretariat for the Netherlands:
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